



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 149

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2003

No. 135

Senate

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

Sovereign God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, You alone possess immortality and dwell in unapproachable light. We thank You for this land and for freedoms purchased with blood. Forgive our desire to seek the path of least resistance. Remind us, Lord, that few laudable goals are won without sacrifice. Teach us how to endure trials as we strive to live for You, to fight faith's battles leaning on Your strength. Give this Nation Your favor and hold it in the grip of Your gracious providence. Give our Senators a productive day and the wisdom to choose the excellent. May they labor to preserve the greatness of our national heritage as they strive to unite us. Be with each of us throughout this day and keep us in the way of love.

We pray this in Your Holy Name.
Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we will be in a period of morning business for the purpose of making statements and introducing legislation. At 2

o'clock this afternoon, the Senate will resume consideration of the District of Columbia appropriations bill. It is still our desire to finish this bill this week. The managers were here Friday and will be here again today ready to make progress on the bill.

I announced last Friday that any amendments offered during today's session will be stacked for votes beginning at approximately 5:30 p.m. today. If Members do not come forward with their amendments, it would be my hope that the bill could be brought to third reading and the Senate will then vote on passage of the bill.

On the issue of DC school choice, we spent significant time last week on it, and the Mayor came to the Capitol imploring us to allow the District of Columbia schoolchildren to receive a decent education. We heard a lot of arguments from the other side as to why this should not happen. We heard from the other side that the District's public schoolchildren should be only allowed to go to a better school if the District's nonpublic schools submit a new, onerous, burdensome set of regulations. In other words, the nonpublic or private schools should have to pay for the failure of some of the District's schools. The logic of this type of argument simply is not clear. Children are not horses. They cannot be traded and they should not be traded.

We also heard that because this plan is modest and cannot provide scholarships for all of the District's children, then none of the District's children should have this opportunity to benefit. William Raspberry today in his syndicated column said it very well when he said, "How does it follow that nobody should get life vests, because there aren't enough to go around?" That is a good question, made even more puzzling by the fact that the same critics who charge the program for not being generous enough say it is a radical departure from the status quo.

Thomas Sowell, in his syndicated column today, likens this to the classic complaint that the food doesn't taste good, and even worse, there is not enough of it.

Well, the fact of the matter is we have had three full debates on this topic of the District appropriations but concentrating on education in the District. Today will be our fourth day of debate and discussion on this issue.

Despite all of these alleged concerns, the other side—the opposition—has not yet offered any amendments. We have not had them come forward and say this is our amendment; let's have a vote on the amendment. Thus, I am left with the conclusion that the opposition would prefer the schoolchildren in the District remain trapped in schools that are not giving them the opportunities to learn and to grow. I hope this is not the case and that we will press forward and work together to achieve passage of the bill this week.

If we are unable to make progress on the bill today in terms of amendments, we will have votes this afternoon on our judicial nominees. Seven additional judges were reported last Thursday, and we will begin ordering votes on those nominations this week.

This week, as I stated a couple of weeks ago now—almost two weeks ago—my intentions are to have the Senate begin the urgent supplemental request for Iraq and Afghanistan security. That discussion and debate is very important, and I have set aside this week, recognizing that we are going on recess next week, to address this very important issue, which is important because it looks at security in Iraq and in Afghanistan with a real focus on our troops who deserve that support. The full Senate will begin consideration of that bill as soon as it becomes available for floor action.

I know we will have full and complete debate, looking at the various aspects of that bill on the floor of the Senate, and thus as we talked about on

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S12105